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ASTRAY.

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ASTRAY.

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TO

MY DEAR LITTLE NEPHEW

HARRY LAWRENCE INGLES,

FOR WHOM THEY WERE ORIGINALLY WRITTEN,

THESE LINES ARE INSCRIBED,

WITH EVERY FEELING OF AFFECTION,

BY

F. M.

ASTRAY.

Two children wandered forth alone
For the sweet summer day;
They went where oft their feet before
Would after flow'rets stray.
As on they walked, those tiny boys,
Unconscious of the hour,
Their devious footsteps boldly struck
Each path where grew a flower:
And chatter gay and laughter clear
Rang mid the woodland lone;
No bird that soared on upward wing
Trilled with a happier tone.
Their little hands with violets blue
And buttercups were full,
These were "for Mother" or "for Dad,"
"For Baby these we pull."
And so they wandered gaily on
All through the summer day,
Till noon-tide heats were come and gone;
And still they laugh and play.
But, well-a-day! their nimble feet
Grew wearied out at last,

The little boys began to think
That dinner time was past.
They said they must be home at noon,
Or Mother, sure, would scold;
And set out on the home-ward march,
With courage true and bold.
But ever, as they onward toiled,
More tangled grew the way;
Till, on the hush'd and shadowy wood,
Descended evening gray:
Descended, as a mantle dark,
The near approach of night,
Then, all perplexed, they sat them down,
And shivered with affright.
And, "Brother," said the younger one,
"How very tired am I,
"So hungry too, oh! take me home;"
(In vain his pleading cry!)
"See all the flowers are dead and gone,
"I cannot hold them now,
"Oh! I am hungry, take me home."
And tears began to flow.
"I cannot go," the elder said,
"Though much for home I long,
"Harry, in coming thus away,
"We both did very wrong.
"For mother said we always must
"Tell her before we go,
"And we never should have gone so far
"And lost our path-way so."
"Oh! is it lost?" cried little Hal,
"Oh! Jack, what shall we do."

"I cannot stay here all night long,
"I shall die and so will you.
"And what will Mother say to-night,
"When supper's come, and she,
"Though still she looks with longing eyes,
"Her boys can nowhere see?
"And when the prayers are said, and all
"Are going safe to rest,
"Then you and I, dear Jack, will not
"Be there to be undressed.
"And who will feed poor Puss to-night,
"And your dog Fido, brother?
"Oh! I do so want to go to Dad,
"And see my own dear Mother."
"Oh! Harry, see, it darker grows,"
Said Jack with bated breath,
"I wish we'd never come so far,
"I fear 'twill be our death;
"For Mother always says the dew
Is bad for us at night,
"And will not let us sit on grass:
"But, if the moon is bright,
"Perhaps we then shall find the path:
"I am so weary too,
"My feet are very—very sore,
"And I'm hungry just like you."
"Oh! Johnny dear, said little Hal,
"I know what we must say,
"Let's kneel and make our evening prayer.
"God hears us if we pray—
"And when 'Our Father' we begin,
"Be sure to think He hears.

"For mother said our Lord taught that,
"And we must have no fears:
"P'rhaps, when we ask for 'daily bread,'
"He'll send dear Daddy by,
"For He knows we children must be fed,
"Like the ravens when they cry;
"And if not, still He'll care for us,
"And we can go to sleep,
"And try to think we are at home;
"Dear Johnny, do not weep—
"Come, kneel with me, I'm sure He'll hear;"
And 'mid the woodland wild,
A clear soft voice went up in prayer
From that saintly little child.
Oh! holy faith! oh, child-like trust!
Blush, Christian, blush to see,
In this pure simple little one,
What thou thyself shouldest be.
The prayer was scarcely said, when, lo!
Quick eager steps draw near,
The boys are safe in Daddy's arms
Both from reproof and fear;
And Mother, when she sees them come,
Forgets that she should scold,
But takes them to her throbbing breast
In thankfulness untold.